

## always mine, always yours by gideongrace

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**Summary:**

In every universe, in every way, no matter how they meet, no matter how it happens, Billy Hargrove and Steve Harrington end up together. They belong together.

(This is tumblr fic prompts and short stuff I posted there and am re-posting here. There's a lot of angst and fluff and a lot of hurt/comfort as those tend to be my favorite things.)

# 1. Perfect

## Notes for the Chapter:

This was originally posted on tumblr for the prompt - "Help me I'm being hit on at a bar please be my fake boyfriend for a second." - from itscrybabyharrington

The guy sitting next to Billy is like a walking cliché. He's got bright pink hair and is wearing a rainbow striped t-shirt and has these big, exaggerated muscles Billy knows are all for show. He could tell after three seconds of talking to him that the guy's never gotten in a fight in his life, never needed those muscles for a second and it pisses him off like few things manage to do anymore.

Because Billy's never tried to be anything other than what he is and he's got the scars to prove it. And on top of all that he's wearing ridiculously tight pants and he doesn't pack, not tonight and not ever, those things are just too damn uncomfortable. He's obvious about what and who he is but this guy, the way he's looking at him and the things he's been saying - namely that he'd like to ride Billy's dick into the sunset - has him uncomfortable in a way he doesn't know what to do with.

This guy doesn't get it and nothing Billy's said so far seems to have clued him in, the guy's just not listening and Billy doesn't want to start a fight in a gay bar, not tonight, so when he sees a gorgeous brunette walk in he uses one of his old tricks, one of the ones from the playbook for the other side of the field and calls out, "About fucking time you showed up, babe, I've been waiting for you damn near all night!"

The brunette looks up like he's Bambi and he's just been shot at, big, wide brown eyes almost doubling in size in a way that has Billy biting his lip and grinding down on his bar stool, but then, surprisingly, Bambi breaks into a smile and heads over.

"Oh, please," he says with an exaggerated little eye roll that has Billy's hips twitching, his body trying to drag itself forward without any command from Billy to do so, just acting on pure instinct. "We both

know you have not been waiting that long, so just stow the dramatics, alright?" Bambi says this like this is a thing they do all the time and Billy smirks at him, imagining it. This whole fantasy life fleshes itself out in Billy's mind between one heartbeat and the next, a life where him and Bambi are together, always teasing but loving, so loving, just like the look Bambi's throwing at him right now and Billy wants it so badly his bones ache, like actually, physically ache.

Then, just to add a cherry on top of the whipped cream on top of this delicious cake, Bambi makes this show of looking Mr. Pink Hair up and down dismissively like, *you're in my seat, you're talking to my boyfriend, move, fuckwit*, and Mr. Pink Hair *does* and Billy cackles and Bambi draws him in for a kiss that has Billy's toes curling in his boots.

Billy gulps as they break apart and Bambi's face falls. "Too much?" he says, suddenly nervous and Billy smiles ferociously and says -

"No, I'd say it wasn't enough," before grabbing Bambi by the collar and dragging him in for another kiss, longer this time. When they part again, this time for air because breathing is a thing that still matters even if Billy thinks maybe he'd rather drown if he gets to do it by kissing this man, he says, "I'm Billy, by the way."

"Steve," Steve says and Billy shakes his head. Steve is too common a name for him, Billy knows he's just going to keep calling him Bambi. Or babe. Babe is good, too. Billy's always had a thing for pet names and this guy - Steve - looks like he was made to wear them.

They kiss until they nearly choke again, bodies only breaking apart when their chests start heaving against each other with the need for air but Steve only draws back just far enough for breath, body still pressed firmly to Billy's, hands still wrapped in the long hair Billy's always refused to cut even when it made passing impossible. He can feel Steve's heart racing like it's inside his own body and it's like a siren's song, making him want more and more and more.

"Do you maybe wanna..." Steve says, voice wrecked and beautiful, "do you maybe wanna get out of here?" and oh god, does he ever, but even this deep in it Billy knows better, knows above all else he has to be concerned with his own safety first and foremost.

"I'm -" he starts but Steve cuts him off, dragging one of Billy's hands down his chest and Billy *wants*, more than anything he's ever wanted but he has to be clear here, Steve has to know. "I'm-" he starts again and Steve's hand stops dragging his, leaves them both stranded somewhere over Steve's stomach and Billy *wants*, but before he can finish, Steve starts talking.

"Seen you before. Seen you in those exact pants, actually." Steve sounds rushed, almost like he's frantic and it makes red alerts start going off in Billy's head, because of course this was too good to be true, of course it is. Steve starts dragging his hand down again, still talking, saying, "I like to be a little less obvious, but I'm the same as you," but it isn't until Billy's fingers make contact with the familiar un-flesh-like squish of Steve's packer that the words "same as you" click in his head. Steve is the same as him. Steve is the same as him. Steve is *perfect*.

"Let's go then. Lead the way, Bambi," Billy says, grin a mile wide and showcasing without a doubt how completely, hopelessly head-over-heels he is right now.

Steve smiles back just as big, just as gone, and says, "Bambi, huh?" like he's rolling the words around in his mouth, seeing how they taste. "I like that."

Somehow, Billy's smile gets wider. He thinks it might actually break his face, that he might actually get it stuck like this. "Thought you might," he says.

## 2. Cherry

### Notes for the Chapter:

Posted on tumblr for the prompt -“You’ve got something on your lip, here let me.” - from granpappy-winchester.

Steve is utterly, utterly hopeless, he knows this. And Billy is an ass. And fucking with him.

And he doesn't fucking care.

Because Billy coming in and asking to sample every single flavor of ice cream that they've got at this Hell they call Scoops Ahoy and hemming and hawing about it for five solid minutes and then not buying anything is sometimes all Steve's got to look forward to.

It's sometimes what he dreams about.

Okay, he dreams about it a lot, actually. Like an alarming amount of his nights are spent dreaming about that idiot, his dumb face and his dumb curls.

Especially on the days Billy comes directly from the pool with his tight red shorts on and that stupid whistle still around his neck and his even more stupid (or more accurately, stupidly gorgeous) arms on display.

Like today.

When Steve's hair has been flat for the past hour and Robin is holding up the sign that all but says "Steve Harrington is a big loser" that she's added two new marks to today and *not* under the win column.

Billy stops in front of the counter and licks his lower lip like he's been looking forward to this all day. Probably not for the same reasons Steve has, but then Steve is pathetic and call this strike three for Robin's dumb tally, whatever, Steve's over it.

"Hmmm..." Billy says. "I think I'd like to try the cherry today, Captain

Steve."

Except for that Steve's not over it. At all. He might never be over it. Ever.

"Alright," Steve says real slow. He gets up off the back counter even slower. He might be hopeless but that doesn't mean he's got no pride. He leans against the plastic of the front counter and slides the door open at a glacial pace, glaring at Billy the entire time.

"Oh," Billy says, grin shark big and just as feral, "I think you're forgetting something." He reaches up and over the ice cream freezer to flick Steve's hat. "Say it."

Strike four in the Steve Harrington is a big loser column.

Steve says it.

And he hates himself.

And he wants to spit in the cherry ice cream but with the way Billy won't stop staring at him there's no way to do that and get away with it. He's tempted to do it anyway. He's tempted to say, "Fuck you, Hargrove," but then Robin would ask him why rather than just stare at him like she's doing now and that would really just cause more problems than it solves.

So he rolls his eyes hard enough he feels it in the back of his neck, scoops out the tiniest portion of cherry he can manage into a cup that he crushes half to death before handing it over.

Billy dips his spoon into it and takes out half, like he's gonna savor this, fucking bastard, and he moans as he dips the tiny little plastic spoon into his mouth.

It's the dirtiest clean thing Steve's ever seen in his life. It's obscene. He's glad there aren't any children present.

Billy's eyes widen as he takes the spoon out and somehow that's worse. Like Steve is never going to not be thinking of Billy making that face kind of worse. Like Steve already knows he's doomed to get himself off tonight thinking of Billy making that face kind of worse.

And then...

"There's..." Steve says. He presses himself into counter. Pretends he doesn't. "You have..." He waves a hand at Billy's bottom lip. There's a tiny spot of pink cherry ice cream on Billy's full, perfect lower lip. It takes more willpower than Steve thought he possessed for him not to reach out and wipe the offending spot away.

It takes even more willpower not to just dive over the counter, knock Billy to the floor and lick it off then lick into his mouth like he's a goddamn ice cream cone. Steve wants to. He's starving. He wants to, he wants to, he wants to -

"Right here?" Billy says. He swallows heavily enough that his Adam's apple bobs and Steve can think of nothing but licking at Billy's neck, sucking a bruise right in the center, right where it could never be hidden, not that anyone could ever know he'd been the one to do it.

"Y-yeah." Steve averts his eyes as Billy's hand rises to his lips and wipes. For the first time since this all started, he finds himself wishing Billy would just pick something and leave because if he has to take much more of this he might just spontaneously combust.

"You know," Billy says, that sharp grin evident in his words so much that Steve doesn't need to look at him to know that it's there. Steve looks anyway and instantly regrets it as his brain floods itself with images of Billy looking up at him with that sharp grin wrapped around his dick.

"I think I'll take the cherry tonight," Billy says and thank God for small mercies because Steve is so not making it home before he has to deal with himself. At this rate, he's not sure how he's going to even make it to the bathroom or how he's going to keep Robin from noticing.

Somehow, his voice comes out of his mouth sounding completely unaffected as he says, "Sure."

He scoops the ice cream into a cone, takes Billy's money and that's the end of it.

Or at least it is until he walks out of the mall an hour later, the tar of the parking lot still hot under his cheap sneakers and he sees Billy standing in front of his car, the remains of his ice cream cone still gripped in his fist.

"Harrington," Billy says as soon as he's close enough. Like this is a thing they do. Like they know each other. Or...

Something.

Steve says nothing. He's too tired and it's too late and he doesn't care.

He doesn't care except...

Then Billy tips the cone up to his mouth and drinks down the contents at the bottom of it and it has to be gross, he bought it over an hour ago, it has to be hot and nasty and Billy has to have...

Totally been waiting out here for him for over an hour in this stinking summer heat with melted ice cream and a plan.

Billy bites into the cone like it's the greatest thing he's ever tasted, bite by excruciating bite until it's all gone and there's this tiny patch of cherry ice cream making its way down Billy's chin and - and -

Steve glances quickly around the parking lot. It's late, it's dark and there aren't any other cars left in the parking lot other than Steve and Billy's.

"Fuck it," Steve says. In a second he's on Billy, pushing him against the car and licking that ice cream off his chin and licking up to his lips and kissing him. He tastes like cherries. He tastes goddamn delicious.



### 3. Dangerous

#### Notes for the Chapter:

Originally posted to tumblr for the prompt -  
"Everyone thinks I should stay away from you  
because you're dangerous" - from judasviscariot

Thing is, of the two of them, Billy's not the dangerous one. He looks like he's the dangerous one, he sneers and he yells and he fights and he has the car and the clothes and the body and on and on and on and *on*.

And Billy knows what he looks like. He *knows*, okay. He's *aware*.

And he hears it, the things the kids whisper at Steve when they think he can't hear them. Not that they're quiet. Or subtle.

"Why him?"

"He's here, again, really?"

"Really? This is the person you're choosing? Really?"

"He's a dick."

"If you like guys, there have to be other ones in town you could date."

And his personal favorite, something he overheard Dustin saying last night during movie night at Steve's - "Letting that guy in your bed is like sleeping with a loaded gun with the safety off. Watch yourself, Steve."

Billy would think Henderson was funny, might even like him if he wasn't constantly trying to get between him and the one person he actually gives a fuck about in this town. Maybe on this planet.

But still. Even with all that.

Billy's not the dangerous one. He's not the one whose fought monsters. Fought monsters and *won*. Fought monsters with nothing

but a baseball bat loaded with nails and a protective streak a mile wide. Fought *Russian Fucking Soldiers* and again, won. With nothing but his fists and his need to protect his friends.

Steve has simultaneously the biggest heart and the most fight in him of anyone Billy has ever seen and people get so hung up on the first part, on his big heart, on his floppy hair and his big, dumb Bambi eyes that they miss the second part. They miss the way once Steve has decided someone is his he will fight to the death for them and beyond. Literally. Billy is only here right now because Steve had decided at some point he belonged to him and brought him back kicking and screaming from the dark.

But with Steve's hair and his face and his smiles like the actual sun has been set loose inside him, people underestimate him. For fuck's sake, even *Steve* underestimates Steve, which is a damn shame because Steve is single-handedly the most competent person Billy knows. Billy's never seen Steve fail at anything he actually set his mind to, not once. Not ever. Steve has no understanding of words like "give up" or "back down". When Steve fights, it's to the death.

And underestimating that?

Underestimating him?

That's fucking dangerous.

## 4. First

The thing about it is Tommy was there first. That's what pisses him off. It was supposed to be him and Steve. They were supposed to graduate together and they were supposed to move out of town together and they were supposed to be together.

That had been the plan. And okay, maybe that last part had been unspoken, and okay, maybe Tommy knew deep down that all the furtive, quiet blow jobs Steve had given him in his bedroom late at night when his Dad wasn't home and his Mom was asleep hadn't meant the same thing to Steve as they'd meant to him, but...

But... if they could've just left town together. If they could've just left town and gotten away from their parents, gotten away from stupid girls and stupid... *everything* it would've worked out. Dreaming of the thousands of different ways it would have played out, could have played out, what he would say, what Steve would say... sometimes that was all that kept him going. For a long time, the thought of finally getting to be with Steve was all that kept him going.

And then Nancy had showed up. And then Steve had left him and his whole world had dried up and went sour, went sideways and Steve yelled at him, "Nancy's not like you guys, she's not miserable!" and Tommy wanted so badly to shout back, "The only one who's ever been able to make me miserable is you!" but he didn't. He didn't because Carol was there and sometimes he figured Carol knew, figured she saw the glazed look he got in his eyes after kissing her and didn't really believe him when he said he was just high on her.

And he didn't because he was too scared for Steve to hear what he really wanted to say - *"I'm only miserable because I'm in love with you and you refuse to see it!"*

And then there was Billy and Billy, well, Billy wasn't Steve, but he was pretty and he was dangerous and...

He was just as hung up on Steve as Nancy had been at first, no, more than Nancy. Way more than Nancy. Steve had loved Nancy, Tommy

had watched the seeds of that love plant themselves and change his best friend from the inside out, change him into someone Tommy wasn't worthy of touching, but for Nancy, Steve was just a passing phase on her way to *Jonathan Fucking Byers* of all people, which is something Tommy will never understand, not ever. How someone could not just see Steve but have him, fully and completely have him, and pass him up for somebody else?

There's not a single thing in the entire world that makes less sense.

But Tommy looks at Billy and he watches the way Billy watches Steve and he knows Billy feels the same way he does. About Steve.

He knows he's just a passing phase for Billy on his way to Steve.

And worse?

He sees the way Steve looks at Billy, proving once and for all it's not that Steve's not into guys, not that every time they were together was just Steve experimenting, not that when Steve's older he'll say he did some pretty wild things in his youth and leave it at that. No, Steve likes guys. He just doesn't like *him*.

And that's what pisses him off the most. Because he was there first. And Steve was supposed to be his. And instead he's forced to watch as Steve makes eyes at another guy and it makes him so sick he wants to scream and tear all of his hair out.

So he says mean shit to Steve. And he watches. And he waits for the day he can get out of this town and get over Steve Fucking Harrington.

Because there has to be more to his life than this. He has to be worth more than this, has to be worth more than watching Steve's eyes go wide when Billy pushes him down on the basketball court and feeling his heart shatter.

There has to be more out there than this and when he gets out of this town he is going to find it.

## 5. Fight

"Unngh," Steve groans, his lips, his whole face, really, pressed into the side of Billy's neck.

It's the end of a particularly long and hellish day and all Steve wants to do is go home and take his pants off and watch a movie with his boyfriend and not have to deal with anyone else for the next twelve to fourteen hours and not have to think about the never ending retail hell that's awaiting him tomorrow and the next day and the next and the next...

Unfortunately, they still have to make it home. And the train from the mall where they both work to home takes an hour. And he's feeling whiny and grumpy and gross and Billy's car is in the shop and his parents took his back and...

"Unnngh," he groans again, louder this time. Billy laughs and runs a hand through his hair, his nails scraping Steve's scalp in the most delicious kinda way that might just have Steve starting to purr like he's an actual goddamn cat. He might also start rubbing his face up and down Billy's neck. Because if he's a cat then Billy is definitely his catnip.

Somewhere down the train someone coos, "Oh, that's so cute!" and it has Steve jerking up and back to fully irritated consciousness in an instant.

He looks over and there's a woman walking towards them and she's got this big smile on her brightly painted lips and it makes something in Steve's gut twist because he's seen this look before.

He looks back to Billy and sees Billy's face morph into that carefully pointed neutral look that says he's readying himself for something just as Billy's hand in his hair slips down to the nape of his neck, possessive and hot and Steve just knows this isn't gonna end well.

"You two are just so cute!" the woman says, clasping her hands together in front of her and looking for all the world like she's

looking on at two monkeys in a zoo, like they're only here for her amusement, like they're some kinda show rather than just people on a train and Steve's still pressed up against Billy closely enough that he feels more than hears the sound Billy makes, something like a growl, something real pissed off. He doesn't even need to look to be able to perfectly imagine the way Billy's nostrils are probably flaring right now - he needs to get ahead of this and fast.

"Look, lady," Steve says, leaning further into Billy as he does so. "Just fuck off, alright?"

The woman before them steps back, looking like she's just been slapped. "What?" she snaps, hand flying to her chest and everything. Because of course she's that kind of ridiculous.

"We're not some monkeys in a zoo for you to stare at," Steve says using the line he'd only just thought up. "We're just a couple trying to get home after a long day and you are not helping anything or anyone so just. Fuck. Off." He smiles his best, most polite smile before adding, "Please."

The woman stomps off to the other end of the train car in a huff and as she does, Steve feels Billy's chest rumble. Steve looks over and sees Billy with his free hand raised to his mouth, trying to stop himself from laughing.

"Every time," Billy says, laughter spilling out between the words. "It never fails to get you. Every time."

Steve turns so he's facing Billy and almost regrets it when he feels Billy's hand slip away from the back of his neck. Almost. "What do you mean? What never fails to get me?"

Billy rolls his eyes and finally drops his hand from his mouth. "Anytime someone bugs us about anything gay, you can't let it go. I have never seen you let it go once."

"And what?" Steve can feel himself starting to get angry. "You think I should?"

Billy goes from laughing to serious in two seconds flat. "No. Never."

"Then what?"

Billy shrugs and wraps his arms around Steve's shoulders, the tips of his fingers brushing up against the back of Steve's neck again. "It's just fun not being the hot-headed one for once."

"You're an ass."

"You love my ass."

Steve groans and raises a hand to his face. "Yes, unfortunately, I do."

## 6. Dreaming

steve's mom keeps taking him to the hospital. he keeps getting sick. shaking. nausea. vomiting. dizzy spells. fainting. the doctors can't figure out what's wrong with him but it keeps happening. he was barely able to graduate high school and now he can't keep a job.

billy and robin are witches. they work with el to keep the gates to the upside down closed.

and one time after a particularly rough battle billy is at the hospital getting stitches and he feels this power calling to him so he gets up and follows it.

at first there's just a feeling but as he gets closer there are these pulsing black vines of magic, almost like the vines in the upside down. and this power, these vines lead him to this boy's room and this boy is asleep and sweaty and dishevelled and he looks so weak, so fragile, but the magic is all emanating from him. he's so powerful he's literally leaking magic and billy realizes as he gets closer that the black vines actually Are from the upside down, they're corrupting the magic, they're infecting this boy's soul.

and this boy, this beautiful boy, he's going to die, billy can smell it. so he takes all of his own magic and he sets it out, sweeps it over this boy and breaks the hold the vines have, draws them all out and sends them running.

the boy moans and he opens his eyes and he sees billy, says, "who're you?" and billy's about to answer but then somebody billy assumes must be this boy's mother shows up and forces billy out.

steve dreams about the boy he saw. he never got a name but he remembers he saw him in high school a couple times and he gets the idea to dig out his yearbook and find this boy's picture. his name it turns out is billy hargrove and with the name steve looks up his phone number and address then shows up on billy's doorstep the next day.

a girl steve also vaguely recognizes from high school answers the



door, looks steve over and calls out into the house, "billy, your boy is here!" and steve is confused, but then billy's standing in front of him, smiling, and steve almost passes out, he actually has to grip the door frame to avoid falling over but then billy's got a hand on his shoulder and he's dragging him inside and plonking him down on the couch and staring at him in a way that has him feeling all fuzzy and light, but not lightheaded, not like he'll faint, it's light like in a good way. light like he could float, like maybe he already is.

then billy is saying, "do you mind if i try something?" and steve trusts him, doesn't know why but he does so he nods, says, "sure," and billy tells him to close his eyes and he does.

it's only been a week and already, steve's magic is layered with thick, black, poisonous vines that look like they've always been there, like they've been growing there for so much longer than a week, like they've never been touched, let alone shoved out by anything like billy's magic. it makes billy want to choke. instead, he does the same thing he did last time and sets out his own magic over steve's and starts shaking out the toxins, dispelling the vines. only this time robin is standing in the doorway between their kitchen and their living room and giving billy a Look.

steve groans under the weight of billy's magic fighting with the infectious power of the upside down that's strapped itself to him like he's a battery and it needs all the juice he's got and his eyes snap open and as they do he screams in pain, screams in pain and writhes. robin steps forward before billy can think and with a snap of her fingers, steve is asleep. asleep but not quiet. he's still squirming, still thrashing about like a wild thing set on fire and billy wants to hold him still and run his fingers through steve's hair but he needs both hands for what he's doing right now and he can't so he doesn't.

once he's finished cleansing steve's magic, robin nods to the porch. billy follows her out and they yell at each other until they finally agree to introduce steve to el and have her teach steve about magic like she taught them.

when steve wakes up billy explains everything to him and that... goes about as poorly as you'd expect it to and steve runs off.

later that night billy calls el and fills her in on what's happened and she says he should start teaching steve how to protect himself but also that the whole thing makes sense 'cause her dad always said before he disappeared that there was another witch in town somewhere, he could just never find them.

so billy teaches steve how to protect himself, how to put barriers between himself and the world and it takes a while but once steve gets it, he Gets It and the change in him is like night and day. he stops being sick all the time and he develops a massive appetite and starts gaining weight and stops looking like a walking skeleton. (even if he was a beautiful one, now it's better, now it's like he's real.)

and steve's mom takes him to a couple doctors but they mostly shrug and say some variation of: "sometimes people grow out of things," like that makes any sense as an answer, but steve's not about to explain to these doctors (or his mom) that it's actually that magic exists.

and for the first time ever, steve feels like a real, whole person, for the first time ever he has friends - billy and el and robin - and they're teaching him how to use this gift he never knew he had and for the first time ever, things are Good.

and he kisses billy on instinct one day right in the middle of training, kisses him like they've done it a thousand times before, like it's the most natural thing in the world. and billy kisses him back and it's - it Is the most natural thing in the world. for them to kiss each other. for them to be together like this.

and billy runs his hand up the back of steve's neck and robin and el cheer and yell from the open porch door and they don't break the kiss but steve lifts a hand up to flip robin and el off, and he thinks he feels billy lift an arm to do the same but he doesn't open his eyes to check. he keeps his eyes closed and savours the feeling of billy's lips on his, the feeling of billy's big, strong hand in his hair and when they break apart it's only so they can catch their breath and billy, he doesn't go far, he leans his forehead against steve's and they share the same air and -

it's as easy and as natural as breathing never used to be.

because billy, steve thinks, brought him to life, taught him how to breathe, taught him how to Be and he smiles, he smiles so wide billy asks him why he's doing it and the smile splits steve's face in half as he says, " it's because of you," and billy answers back with his own face-splitting grin and they kiss again and it's a kiss that simultaneously splits steve's world right down the center and also a kiss that makes him whole.

## 7. Love

### Notes for the Chapter:

CONTENT WARNING IN THIS FICLET FOR ABUSE.  
NEIL IS IN THIS ONE SO BE WARNED.

This story ends on a sweet note, but still.

"Like we're in love?" Steve says, voice cracking in a way that hits like a bullet straight to Billy's spine and for a moment Billy is paralyzed, can't move as Steve says, "You don't love me?"

No, Billy wants to say. *I do. So fucking much.* But then he can't help but think, *but me loving you will end in your death.* And he knows that he's doing the right thing.

And he wants to explain himself, wants to tell Steve that sometimes monsters have human faces but instead he smiles wide like the shark he's perfected pretending he is, and he says, "No, I don't," all smooth and calm even as every single part of him down to his atoms, down to his very soul just wants to reach out, to cup Steve's face and kiss away all the pain he's feeling. The pain Billy himself caused when he dragged Steve into this bathroom not to kiss him like Steve was expecting, but to break his heart and save his life. He just wants to kiss Steve, forget the last five minutes, forget everything else except for the feel of Steve's lips on his, the feel of Steve's hands in his hair, the way Steve's pulse jumps when he sucks on his neck, but...

He can't. That's not the way the world works - boys like him don't get to have boys like Steve. Not in fucking nowhere, Indiana. Not with fathers like his. So Billy leans back against the wall real casual, like he hasn't got a care in the world and he says, "You had to know it was all bullshit, didn't you, Stevie?" He adds in a sneer for good measure, makes the words sound cruel and taunting even as they dig themselves into his own skin and bite.

Steve shakes his head. "No, but I guess I should have." He smiles and it's pitiful and it's wretched and it etches itself onto Billy's heart, leaving a wound Billy knows will be unlikely to ever heal. "I mean,"

Steve says and he's going for bitter, for spiteful but he just sounds sad, "You fuck everything that moves, so I really should have known I was just one fish in a sea of millions."

Billy makes a noise like this is both clever and an unavoidable truth. "Then swim along, little fish," Billy says. "Go."

He waves a hand at the door, smiles meanly and sets his shoulders back like he's *proud* of himself, like he's done what he set out to do - conquer the great King Steve and leave him like he's nothing but a pile of ashes on the side of the road, rather than the truth - which is that he's everything. That if he truly were a King, Billy would be his Knight and would protect him from any monsters that came their way. Which is actually pretty much what Billy's doing now, Steve's just unaware of it.

Because this isn't a monster that attacks head on and so it can't be fought head on. This is a monster that requires cleverness and sacrifice to beat and luckily (or unluckily, depending on how you look at it), both of those are things Billy's always excelled at.

"You're an asshole," Steve says as he moves for the door. Billy watches him go thinking if he really was a Knight, if he had a sword, he'd impale himself on it. Instead he makes due with cementing the image of Steve walking away from him into his mind's eye forever and heads out to make a new record as the new Keg Stand King.

And it's not enough, it'll never be enough, but maybe if he pretends for long enough, it'll become as natural as the rest of the act he puts on, be as natural as putting himself on display, just another easy, casual, practiced motion.

Or maybe it won't. Maybe he'll wither and rot from the inside out.

He slams back enough cheap beer that he stops thinking about it.

He can't stop *feeling it*, though. And the alcohol brings in another of its friends - rage.

He gets into a fistfight with Tommy over... he has no idea what and then someone, several someones, are kicking him out of the party,

leaving him to stumble home in the dark.

Alone.

///

Never let it be said that Steve Harrington has any sort of impulse control, because he doesn't.

Or any sort of idea when enough is enough, because if he had any sort of sense of *that* he definitely wouldn't be stalking around the bushes behind Billy's house at midnight like some sort of pathetic, creepy weirdo.

But even worse than that? Even worse than being a creepy weirdo in the bushes at night?

No one's even *home* so he's standing in the yard, behind the bushes, like a *creep* for *no reason*.

Billy's probably still at the party, where Steve should be, would be, except...

Except he couldn't stand to stick around once Billy had confirmed what he'd suspected all along - that the whole thing had been fake right from the get go. That *of course* the first person Steve had ever had any sort of real feelings for was just using him for his looks, his popularity and his hair. *Of course* Billy hadn't actually wanted *him*.

Because who would? It's not exactly like there's a whole lot there to stick around for once you got past all that surface stuff.

He turns around to walk home, walk home and get *just* drunk enough to try to block out as much of this night as he can when headlights flash behind him. He turns around to see Billy's Camaro pull up and Billy stumble out about as drunk as he soon intends to be himself.

And Steve should turn around. He should leave. He knows he should

leave. But -

Billy.

So.

Instead he walks slowly up the lawn towards the back of the house, towards Billy's room and he's about halfway there when the lights inside the house all start flickering to life and Steve freezes like an actual deer in actual headlights. He feels caught out, tries to come up with a good lie for why he's here, for what he's doing but he doesn't wind up needing any of them, flimsy as they might be, because instead of anybody coming out to yell at him for sneaking around, someone inside the house starts yelling...

At Billy?

Any investment Steve had in not getting caught disappears as Neil starts getting louder - this isn't like normal yelling. This isn't your typical, "You're seventeen, what the hell are you doing out drinking all night?" parental dissatisfaction. This is violent. This is vengeful. This is... this is *cruel*.

Steve creeps up the rest of the way to the house to kneel under the big window on the side of Billy's room. And for a second, just a second, he hovers, just taking it all in and trying not to scream, but then, with a big, deep breath in, he lifts his head up just enough to peek inside.

And what he sees, it's -

What he sees it's -

It's worse than what he's hearing because Billy -

He isn't Billy at all. He's just standing there, taking it. Quietly. *Agreeably*.

He's just...

Standing there and nodding while Neil throws every gay slur in the book at him, tells him he's reckless, tells him he's irresponsible, tells

him he's a waste of time and space and money and then -

And then -

And then Neil hits him. Neil hits his own son.

And Steve is -

Steve is -

Most unpleasant things to this point in Steve's life have only ever left him feeling bored. Annoyed, maybe. But mostly just bored. Most of his life's kind of boring, to be honest.

But this?

This?

This has him furious. This has him feeling enraged like his skin's been set on fire, like he's burning up from the inside out in a way that only he can see. In a way that only he can *feel* and that he's powerless to do anything about.

He sinks down to the ground, away from the window and puts one hand to his mouth to keep from screaming and the other he grips in the dirt to stop himself from yanking the window open and punching Neil back, right in the chest, like he'd hit Billy.

And Billy. Billy'd just -

Taken the hit.

Billy, who regularly starts fights with anybody and everybody just because he thinks they looked at him wrong.

Billy who -

Billy who was always so hot and cold for reasons Steve could never understand.

Billy who was the handsiest motherfucker alive one minute and who was blocked off, locked down, closed for business the next.



Billy who -

Steve -

He's an idiot with a pretty face but he can still put two and two together -

Billy's been hiding his bruises.

Billy gets hit by his father regularly.

There's another thundering echo of fist hitting flesh as a thought slams into Steve.

Billy had broken up with him.

Because of this.

He digs his hands deeper into the dirt to stop himself from... from... screaming. Crying. Falling to pieces.

No, he's definitely falling to pieces anyway, he's just doing it silently.

He leans his head up against the wall and listens. Neil seems to have stopped.

There's a deafening click as the light is turned off and a heavy thud of footsteps heading away that seem to echo in time with Steve's slowly thudding heart.

He waits.

It's silent and he waits.

Then, a minute later, there's more headlights and the sound of a car driving off and Steve prays that it's Billy, that he's decided he's had enough and he's driving away, never to return (even if it means Steve will never see him again) but then Billy's calling out, "Steve?" and his voice is all deep and raspy and... *broken*.

"Come on out, Steve, I know you're there. I saw you."

But Steve doesn't move. He can't. He knows the car driving away

must have been Neil's, but still, he can't move. If he moves, he'll scream and screaming really seems like the wrong move to be making right now so he sits planted underneath the window.

*"Steve."*

Billy's breath teases the top of Steve's head and Steve half scrambles, half stumbles away from his spot by the window to see Billy leaning out of it, staring at him with eyes that are too bright for anything but unshed tears. He holds his hand out with a raised eyebrow and a look on his face like he thinks he can convince Steve that all that's going on right now is that he's annoyed at him.

But Steve doesn't take it so Billy groans and crawls out himself. He crawls out but he doesn't say anything and he doesn't move like he's wounded and Steve needs to know where Billy got hit, needs to know how bad the damage is, needs to get Billy out of here -

And Steve -

He just gets pissed off. "You really are an asshole," he says and instantly he regrets it, because who insults someone they love after seeing them get beat up by their own father? Who does that?

*(Assholes, that's who.)*

Billy, though, Billy just laughs and it's this hollow, empty sound that has Steve's gut twisting.

"No, I mean -" Steve starts off passionately but the words dead end. He doesn't know what he means. He doesn't know what to say. What he *can* say.

"Fuck."

Billy, for his part, says nothing, just sits rigidly next to Steve, every muscle tensed, flight response primed and ready to roar into action at the slightest sign of trouble and that -

And that -

That has the saddest sigh Steve's ever heard come splitting out from

between his own lips.

"I-" he starts and stops again. He wants to fix this. He can't fix this. He *needs* to fix this. "I-"

"You don't owe me anything," Billy says, soft but determined. "You don't owe me anything so you can just forget you ever saw this and go on with your life."

"Fuck you," Steve spits on instinct and this time he actually slaps his hand over his mouth to *physically* get himself to *stop talking*. Because *jesus christ*, he's just making this worse, isn't he?

Billy starts to get to his feet, starts to climb back in through the window when Steve drops his hand and blurts out, "No, fuck! I love you!"

This has Billy stopping in his tracks so Steve says it again. "I love you!"

Billy remains frozen in place so Steve just keeps saying it, "I love you, I love you, I love you," like he's pouring hot water over ice to get it to melt. "Please sit back down."

Billy does, so Steve keeps going. "I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm so, so, so sorry."

Billy smiles and it's not one of his bright ones, but it's not hollow, either so Steve takes it as a win. "Okay, you didn't handle it *that* badly," Billy says and this time there's a little of his usual spark in the words and that -

That breaks something in Steve. He's been holding off from touching Billy this whole time because Billy's been looking like *he's* the deer in the headlights this time, like he'll up and bolt at any second but Steve can't hold back anymore. He can't.

"That's not what I meant and you know it," he says. He leans in slow at first, giving Billy plenty of time to move if he wants to but -

But he doesn't. Instead, he leans in, too, so Steve slowly, so slowly it feels like it takes nearly an actual eternity, he wraps his arms around

Billy and Billy rests his head on his shoulder and Steve puts his head down on top of Billy's.

"I'm so sorry," Steve says again and this time Billy nods, Steve can feel the movement of Billy's head just under his cheek, so he says it again.

"I love you. I'm sorry and I love you."

## 8. Soft

Steve runs his hands over and over and over the softness that sits just above Billy's hips - he knows Billy is self conscious about it, knows he thinks he's lost something since he came back from the edge of death, back from the edges of Hell itself; knows Billy thinks he is somehow less than since he hasn't been able to work out after that night, after spending months upon months in the hospital, after only just barely being able to walk across their tiny, dingy apartment without breaking into a sweat three months ago, but...

But...

Steve likes him better this way.

Now, don't get him wrong, Billy's abs were nice - smooth and hard to the touch and gorgeous and all of that, but... there's something a little more real about him this way, something a little less caustic, something a little less...

A little less like Billy is putting on a show for the whole world to see and doing it as one big, giant fuck you to everyone and everything that ever thought he was nothing.

And Billy might hate it, and Steve can't possibly imagine how awful it must feel to still be in so much physical pain after nearly a year but also he sees the things that Billy doesn't - like that he smiles more now, and real smiles, not that fake megawatt, hey-watch-me-disarm-you-with-my-charm shit he used to do all the time, but real, tilt your head back, bite-down-on-your-lower-lip-to-keep-from-laughing smiles. And Billy laughs now, too. And cracks jokes. And eats actual meals. (Because, before, like back in high school, Steve had never seen Billy eat anything. Like any lunch break Steve ever went to go find him, it was always to find him outside smoking. He never saw Billy eat anything. Ever.)

So this is better. Scars and all, extra little bit of softness and all, this is better and Steve makes a point of touching Billy whenever he can, but especially on nights like tonight, when Billy storms into the apartment, exhausted after having only worked for four hours at a

job Steve keeps telling him he doesn't need but that Billy keeps insisting he has to go to because, "if I don't have a reason to leave the house I'll lose my fucking mind."

It's on nights like this, where Billy is exhausted and almost snarling with it that Steve coerces him onto their shitty, cheap, quite possibly actually moldy couch to watch a movie and he just slowly runs his hands over and over and over every perfect, scarred up, soft inch of Billy's body until Billy melts into it and his grunts and his snarls turn into soft moans and slowly exhaled breaths, like something sharp that was held close enough to hurt is being let go - it's on nights like this that Steve takes extra care and attention to show Billy that he's whole and he's real and he's loved and he's perfect. Every scarred up, soft inch of him is perfect and Steve will keep doing this - offering constant little touches, little kisses, giving Billy this constant, unending praise with his fingertips, until Billy gets it.

He's perfect like this, like this and like any other shape his body will take over the years, it's perfect because he's in it and that is enough.

## 9. Thunder

It's been years since they were in high school, years since Billy was that angry, rage-fuelled, spite-filled teenager he used to be. Billy smiles more now and he cracks jokes without malice or cruelty, without the intent of the joke being solely to wound or to bite. He laughs and it's a sound that coats whatever room he's in with gold and fills it with thunder.

He's learned safer, more useful outlets for his anger - from boxing to running to, strangely, painting. He paints these beautiful abstract landscapes sometimes full of reds and blacks and deep, dark grays and other times filled with thick ropes of gold and azure, with fat stripes of brown in too many shades to count and Steve's not smart enough to understand what any of it means but he knows how it makes him feel, knows how it makes Billy feel when he's painting it.

Steve's spent hours, nearly days, just pretending to watch television but subtly out of the corner of his eye watching Billy paint, watching the violence pour down his arm to his hand into the brush and onto the canvas.

Billy's learned to deal with his anger.

But not with his pain.

His pain he lets seep deep down into the dark and disused spaces inside of him, lets it sink in and refuses to let it out except for when he's no longer conscious to guard it and keep it hidden, keep in buried.

Billy doesn't look peaceful in his sleep like most people do.

Billy's face twists up, he grunts and he whines and sometimes on bad nights he writhes with it, body shaking, twitching, mouth half-forming snarls long since forgotten while awake and on those nights it's all Steve can do to reach out and touch him, to hold him, to run his hands over any bit of skin within reach.

Sometimes, on the really, really bad nights, Billy fights him, Billy

rolls away, he pushes Steve's hands off and cries louder whenever Steve tries to offer even the tiniest bit of comfort.

It's on these nights Steve tries the hardest, it's on these nights Steve wraps Billy up in his arms and presses kisses to his hair and whispers the sort of small kindnesses that Billy still can't stand to hear while awake.

They've been together almost five years now and still he knows so little of Billy's past, knows so little of the details that have lead him to be like this, that have led him to be filled with enough pain that the reverberations of it could reach out as far as the stars themselves; the kind of pain that could make the stars themselves shudder and fall from the sky.

Steve knows so little of Billy's pain and yet he loves him so much.

He's determined, he's decided (decided long ago, in fact) that he can be patient, that he will be patient because he knows he'll get the story someday.

Because while Billy's pain might be enough to cause the stars themselves to crack and to falter, to crash land into the earth, his smile can outshine the sun and warms Steve better than anything else he's ever known. That alone is worth more than any and all bad nights he might have to endure for now and for years to come.



## 10. King

Steve watches as Tommy drags Billy off to the bedroom and sinks into his chair a little deeper, ready to play through a good chunk of *Breath of the Wild* and laughing in that way he can't help when Tommy and Billy start being loud like they usually do. It's not that he thinks his boyfriends are funny, they're not, just something about sex and the noises people make, even people he loves, are inherently just a little goofy to him.

It takes about an hour before Tommy's sticking his head out the door and shouting, "Get in here!" and behind that is Billy shouting, "Now!" and it has Steve instantly saving his game and running to the bedroom where they've already changed the sheets and Billy is waiting on the middle of their king sized bed looking thoroughly fucked and thoroughly king-like, like even more than he usually does. Then he's crooking a finger at Steve, grinning in that way only he can pull off and it has Steve bouncing onto the bed eagerly with Tommy quickly crawling up behind him and they all collapse into a big pile of limbs and bodies and heat and heartbeats and Tommy's got his hand in Steve's hair, and Steve's got his hand in Billy's and Billy is still grinning in that way he does, like he's conquered the world, like he's conquered the whole world when he thinks he wasn't meant to and that? No way can Steve let that stand so he twists just enough to kiss that stupid smile right off of Billy's face, because he does deserve this, because he was meant to have this. The three of them were all meant to have each other, they were, nobody can tell Steve different, so he kisses that smile off of Billy's face as Tommy kisses his shoulder and everything in the world that matters to Steve is right here, in this bed with him and he's never, ever letting go. Ever.

## 11. California

### Summary for the Chapter:

This fic was written to go with [this fem!harringrove art on tumblr by artzeppo](#).

Steph is pretty sure her favorite sight in the whole, entire world is Billie lying spread out on the hood of the Camaro, her favorite tight little denim miniskirt hiked up around her hips, legs spread wide, ready, waiting.

Steph's least favorite sight in the whole, entire world is definitely, absolutely, for sure the one she's seeing now - Billie with her back turned, Billie facing away from her, Billie dealing with whatever it is she's thinking all on her own, even though Steph is right here, close enough to reach out and touch.

And Steph *wants* to touch, *wants* to reach out, wants to break - wants to *shatter* - the silence that's fallen between them, but she doesn't.

No, instead, she turns away and looks at the sunset, or pretends to, anyway. She can't really pay any attention to it, not now, not with all her energy going to keeping her hands from shaking, not with the thoughts, *What if she's mad at me? What if I've done something wrong?* playing on constant repeat in her head.

And it's a long, long time before Billie finally speaks up and Steph feels like she's aged *years* in the dense, cold silence that's layered over them in fractions, in ever increasing layers since they pulled up and got out of the car.

"So, I, uh-" Billie starts, stammering unnaturally. "I got in. To Berkeley."

"Oh?" Steph turns around to look at Billie, but all she sees is Billie hunching into herself, her back still turned.

"Yeah," Billie says, voice crackling in that way Steph has learned means there's some emotion Billie is hiding, is trying her damndest to

bury six feet under.

"Okay," Steph says, confused. Because while she can understand that Billie's upset, she can't remotely fathom *why*.

"I leave at the end of next week," Billie says and Steph hears the familiar flick of Billie's lighter, hears her inhale sharply, smells the smoke in the air as viscerally as if she'd been slapped with a real, physical, tangible object.

It's quiet. It's *too* quiet. It's so quiet Steph can't hear herself think and she finds herself wishing they'd chosen someplace else to have this conversation, somewhere louder, somewhere with people rather than this deserted stretch of backwoods road.

She'd known something was up when Billie had pulled up with those boxes strapped to the top of her car but one look at the heavy scowl on Billie's face and she'd been too nervous to ask, too nervous to suggest they go anywhere else other than their usual spot, to do their usual thing - listen to music and drink sodas (sometimes with a bit of whatever alcohol they could manage to get their hands on mixed in).

But there's no music today. No alcohol in the sodas, neither. Just the two of them, this sunset, those boxes and the bandage on Billie's arm she refuses to mention covering up what Steph knows must be fresh wounds from the bastard she refuses to give name to in her head.

He doesn't deserve a name. People get names and he's a monster, not a man.

But Billie. Billie is - Billie was -

Steph gets to her feet and walks away from the car, away from Billie.

Billie is leaving. Billie is going to Berkeley and leaving her behind.

So maybe she'll leave first.

She takes another step, fully intending to walk back to town on her own, even if it takes her all night when Billie speaks up again.

"Neil is," she starts, then again stops and it's so, so unlike her to ever

be this nervous that all Steph wants to do is grab Billie's face in her hands and say, "Tell me, tell me, baby, what's wrong," but Billie's leaving, so, instead she grinds her heels into the dirt and grows roots like a *tree*.

"Neil is driving me on Friday," Billie says. "These boxes are, as he put it - *All the crap that you're not taking*." Steph doesn't look but she can perfectly picture Billie simultaneously waving at the boxes and flicking the ash off the end of her cigarette. She wants so badly to go to her.

So badly.

But she remains still, stays a tree, stays safe. Or as safe as she can these days, with her heart living outside her chest and floating along after Billie like it's been doing.

Not that Billie seems to have any idea. Not that Billie's ever said -

Billie's leaving. She's going back to California, back to the sun and the sand and the heat, going far enough away from Hawkins that it - and Steph - will soon be a distant memory and Steph can feel the thin, delicate strands connecting her to her heart slowly snapping one by one by one, can picture Billie taking her heart and throwing it in the dirt.

And -

Steph knows she's being dramatic, all right? She does.

But she's also an eighteen-year-old girl getting her heart broken for the first time by the only girl she's ever loved so if she's not allowed to be dramatic now, then when? When would be appropriate?

Because she can't think of a single better time than now.

"I was thinking," Billie says, so soft her words almost get lost on the wind, "I know it's soon and I don't mean like you'd have to come right away and you can't drive down with me because of Neil, but do you want to come with me?"

Steph sucks in a breath.

She's such an idiot.

"Steph?"

She spins around to see Billie watching her warily and this time, she goes to her. This time, she does grab Billie's face in her hands and she says, "I would *love* to."

"Are you sure?" Billie says, voice going tight and eyes darting over and away, landing everywhere but Steph's face, even as she presses in closer, the cool metal of the car biting into her legs through her jeans. "Because we haven't really been together that long, only eight months and this is halfway across the country-"

Steph silences her first with a kiss then with a softly whispered, "Yes, I'm sure," spoken pressed against her lips like it's a secret. "I've never been more sure of anything in my life."

As Billie kisses her back, Steph feels her heart crash land smack into the center of Billie, just above her own and feels it stick, feels it attaching itself to something in a way its never been able to do before.

And so, heart cemented in place, hands fit perfectly around Billie's face, Steph breaks the kiss one more time to say, "I love you," and watches as Billie's perfect, jaw-droppingly beautiful, achingly gorgeous face breaks into the biggest grin she thinks she's ever seen.

"Yeah, I love you, too," Billie says.

## 12. Beautiful

Billy stands in front of the mirror and does the best pout they can manage before pulling their hair back.

"Hmmm..." they say out loud. "Up or down?" They drop their hair, then pick it up again. It doesn't help. They're still feeling wildly indecisive.

From the bed, Steve groans. He mumbles something, the only word of which Billy catches being "beautiful" before Steve flips over and buries his face under as many pillows and blankets as he can manage, which, considering the state of his bed, is a lot.

Billy pauses for a second before hopping onto the edge of the bed and fishing underneath the blankets for their boyfriend, finding a shoulder, deciding that'll do well enough, and giving it (and the boy attached to it) a thorough shake.

"What was that?" they ask, voice soft but teasing.

Steve groans again and rolls towards them. "I said," he grunts. "You're beautiful either way."

Billy can't help but smile at this, but the smile only grows when Steve sits up, comfortable and easy as anything, chest on full display. It means more than words could ever say that Steve is comfortable enough with them here to be shirtless, to not hide or even just wrap his arms around his body.

He used to. He used to not let Billy touch him, even with a binder on, he used to get twitchy any time Billy's hands got even half an inch down from his shoulders, but, now...

Now he's comfortable. Now it's easy. It's easy and things are good.

Billy places a kiss on Steve's shoulder. "Up," they say, and Steve shuffles to accommodate, making them giggle. "I meant my hair, you goof! I'm gonna wear it up."

Steve smiles and drags Billy down on top of him. "Right," he says. "Up

is good." Steve's hands slide down Billy's sides in a caress so gentle, so delicate it has Billy gasping. He kisses the side of Billy's neck before dragging his lips up slowly towards Billy's jaw. He pulls Billy in close, so every possible inch of their bodies are pressed tight together. "Down is also good," Steve whispers, his mouth close enough to Billy's skin that Billy can feel his breath.

"Mmm," Billy moans. "Yeah. Down is good, too."